

# Cycling on Clifton and Durdham Downs

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Report presented to Downs Committee July 2014

Jon Usher Programme Manager, West of England

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## About Sustrans

Sustrans makes smarter travel choices possible, desirable and inevitable. We're a leading UK charity enabling people to travel by foot, bike or public transport for more of the journeys we make every day. We work with families, communities, policy-makers and partner organisations so that people are able to choose healthier, cleaner and cheaper journeys, with better places and spaces to move through and live in.

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Head Office  
Sustrans  
2 Cathedral Square  
College Green  
Bristol  
BS1 5DD

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VAT Registration No. 416740656

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## Introduction and purpose of report

This report has been prepared at the request of the Downs Committee transport sub-group to examine the opportunities for improvements to the environment for cycling across the Clifton and Durdham Downs. The contents of this report are not recommendations, but merely options as to how routes might be completed in the future.

The purpose of the report is to spark debate and seek approval in principle from the Committee for further examination of the detailed options for cycling on some of the key corridors identified below in light of Bristol's European Green Capital status in 2015.

## Why cycling?

Cycling has formed a core part of transport policy in Bristol for over 20 years. Continued investment over a long period has led to Bristol boasting one of the highest rates for commuting cycling in the UK, indeed the highest of the Core Cities. Sustrans' own National Cycle Network was born in Bristol with the construction of the Bristol Bath Railway Path in the early 1980s the foundation of which developed into a 14,500 mile network of routes stretching across the country.

More recently, the £22.8million Cycling City Project which ran from 2008-2011 developed a network of radial routes for cycling into the city centre. This network consists largely of traffic free greenways, with sections of quiet residential streets, and traffic free facilities where possible on busier roads.

Since the end of this project the network has continued to develop with funding from the Local Sustainable Transport Fund, and now the Cycling Ambition Fund. Bristol has continued to demonstrate to Government that investment in cycling as a mode of transport can and will bring real change.

However, for at least two generations, planning and transport practice in the UK have focused on the car. An unintended consequence of this has been to suppress walking and cycling across all sectors of society. This decline in physically active travel has been a significant contributor to ill-health of many types, including the obesity epidemic currently afflicting all parts of the UK. We need to reverse this trend, and to come up with a radical vision centred on active travel.

We are now facing a very different world. Global climate change, rapidly rising oil prices and concerns over security of energy supply mean we need to change the way we travel. By shifting from motorised transport to active travel we can make a significant contribution towards tackling all these issues, and at the same time reverse the declining trend in physical activity, in people of all ages. This would be good for public health and save billions of pounds in future healthcare costs.

Policies and strategies at all levels advocate walking and cycling but motor transport still takes priority in the big decisions and in the allocation of investment. As a consequence the UK lags badly behind many European countries in levels of active travel. To return walking and cycling to levels that can contribute to a healthy society, changes are needed in policy and practice.

The significant change required is that we now have to invest heavily in all forms of active travel, including cycling, and recreate an environment where children can play in the street and adults lead an active life. Government policies at all levels, public health guidance and expert opinion have all pointed in this direction for years. The radical element is this: it is time to stop talking and act.

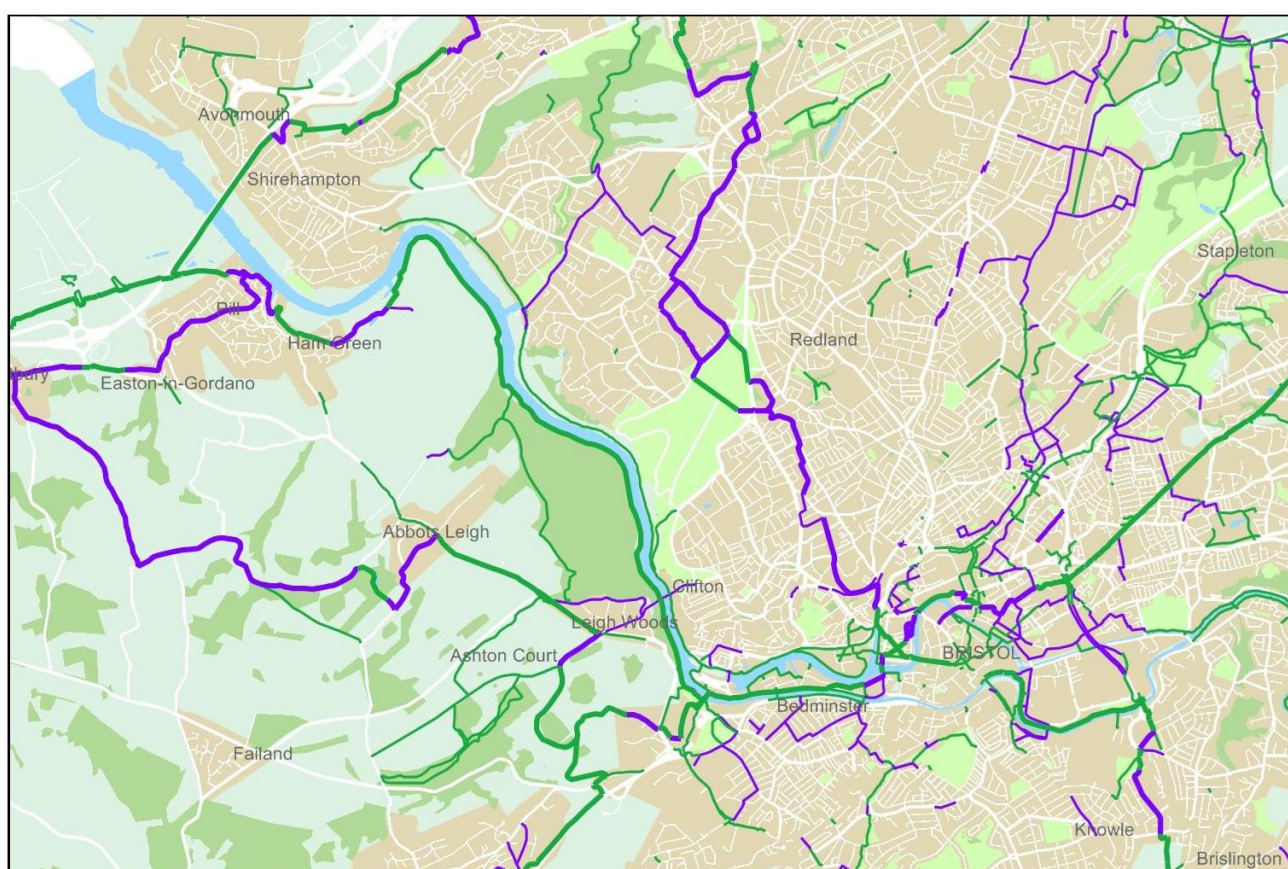
There is strong evidence that cycling can help contribute to economic productivity (e.g. reducing costs of congestion, physical activity increasing productivity, access to opportunities in employment and training); education (e.g. improved pupil concentration and physical activity); sustainability (e.g. reducing the carbon intensity of transport); quality of life (e.g. reducing congestion/pollution and improving public space); and to tackling issues of climate change, congestion, social inequality and deprivation.

## Cycling on the Downs – the current position

*It shall be lawful for the Downs Committee from time to time to exercise the following powers with respect to the said Downs, and make all necessary orders for carrying the same into effect: ... They may from time to time direct what parts of the said Downs shall or shall not be used by carriages and horses.<sup>1</sup>*

The Downs Committee currently prohibits cycling on any part of the Clifton or Durdham Downs, whether across the turfed areas or made paths through existing bylaw powers. There are however two shared use corridors for cycling adjacent to the highway along Stoke Road and Westbury Road. These shared use facilities carry the National Cycle Network route 4 as it passes through Bristol between London and Fishguard.

The map below indicates the existing National Cycle Network (bold) and local routes across the city, with purple lines showing on-road and green lines traffic free facilities.



As a result of investment indicated above, there has been a proliferation of routes for cycling through the north east, south east and south west of the city. However, there is only one signed cycle route through north west Bristol partly as a result of the topography, but largely as a result of the policy of the Downs Committee in prohibiting cycling on the Downs. In consequence of this cycling can take place only on the existing highway network, which carries high volumes of traffic and is in no way conducive to encouraging people to cycle. Previous discussions about improvements to the cycling conditions across the Downs themselves have not resulted in any major improvements with existing facilities pushed to the margins on substandard width paths. With Bristol being awarded European

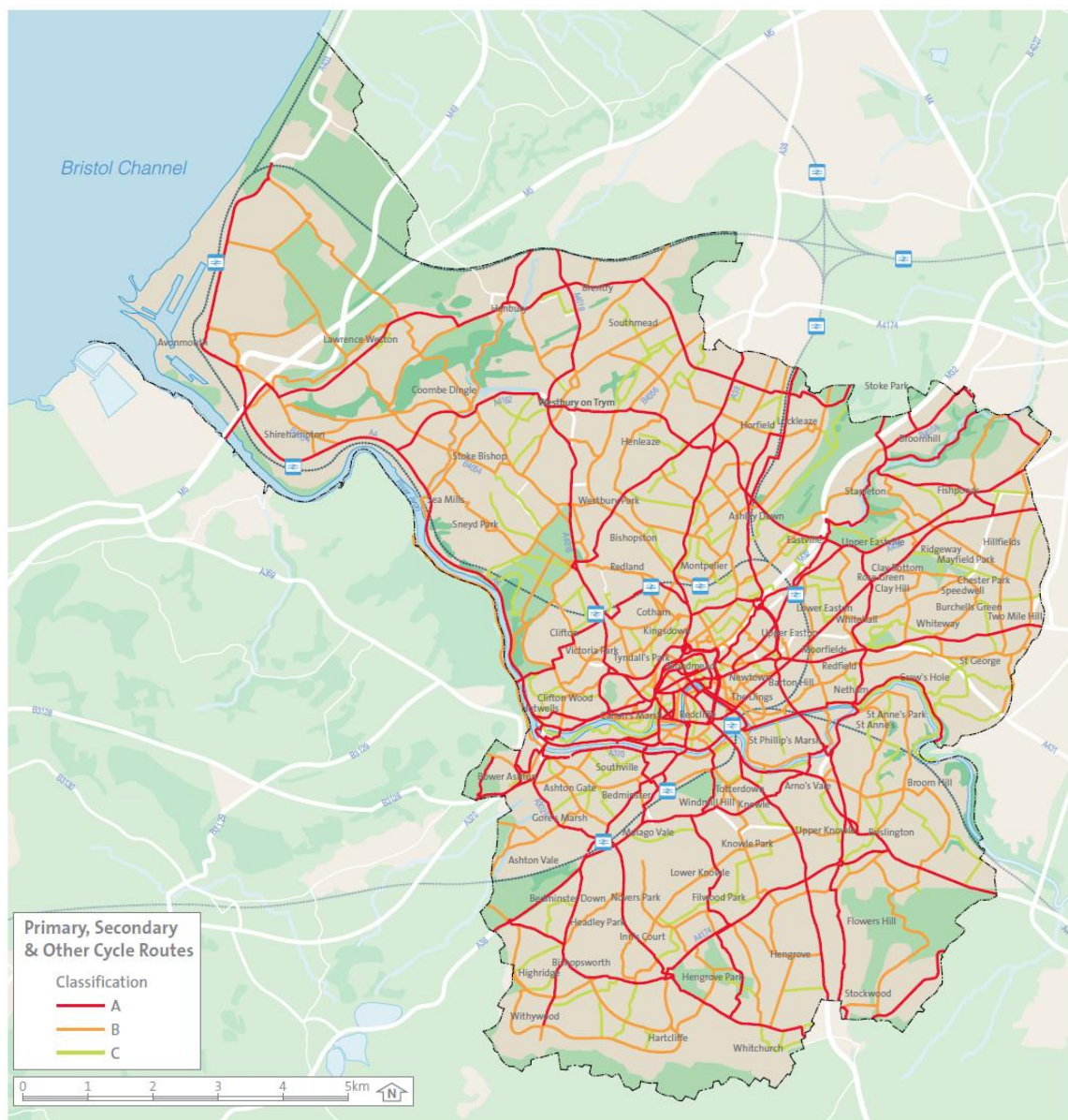
<sup>1</sup> THE CLIFTON AND DURDHAM DOWNS (BRISTOL) ACT 1861 as viewed at <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/sites/default/files/assets/documents/111%20estates-the-downs-act-1861.pdf>

Green Capital in 2015 there is a perfect opportunity to encourage greater use of sustainable transport modes across the Clifton and Durdham Downs.

## What needs to change?

Bristol has high aspirations for changing the cycling environment across the city, and Mayor Ferguson has a stated objective of increasing the levels of commuting cycling to 20% by 2020 (from its current level of 7.8% as reported by the 2011 Census). In order to achieve this level of change, existing cyclists cannot be expected to cycle more. Many would like to cycle but find the existing road environment too intimidating as a result of the speed and volume of traffic. The only means of addressing this is to provide people with safe routes to enable them to cycle in comfort and with freedom from fear. The right infrastructure should enable those aged 8-80 to feel empowered to cycle as evidenced by cycling levels elsewhere on the continent in countries such as the Netherlands and Denmark, and in cities such as Frankfurt and Basel.

These ambitious plans for the city have seen the development of a strategic cycle network plan shown below<sup>2</sup>.



<sup>2</sup> Strategic Cycle Network plan due for public consultation later in June by Bristol City Council as part of Cycling Strategy document

This network is comprehensive and largely mirrors the primary road network across the city. A mesh size of approximately 500m means you're never far away from a high quality, safe and attractive facility. This will enable a far greater number of journeys to be made by bike both into the city for work and leisure, but also across the city for shorter utility journeys.

## Proposals for the Downs

As far as the Downs is concerned there are a number of potential routes to consider in order to meet the Strategic Network objectives. These are shown on the plan overleaf in more detail.

The Strategic Cycle network has established a hierarchy of routes based on expected usage.

The primary network is indicated in red on the plan overleaf. This is in recognition that the majority of journeys will take place along the main radial road network, connecting communities such as Henleaze and Westbury on Trym to the centre of the city via the most direct and convenient route.

The secondary network indicated in orange is the capillary network of connections into neighbourhoods and residential areas. These will connect to destinations such as shops and schools.

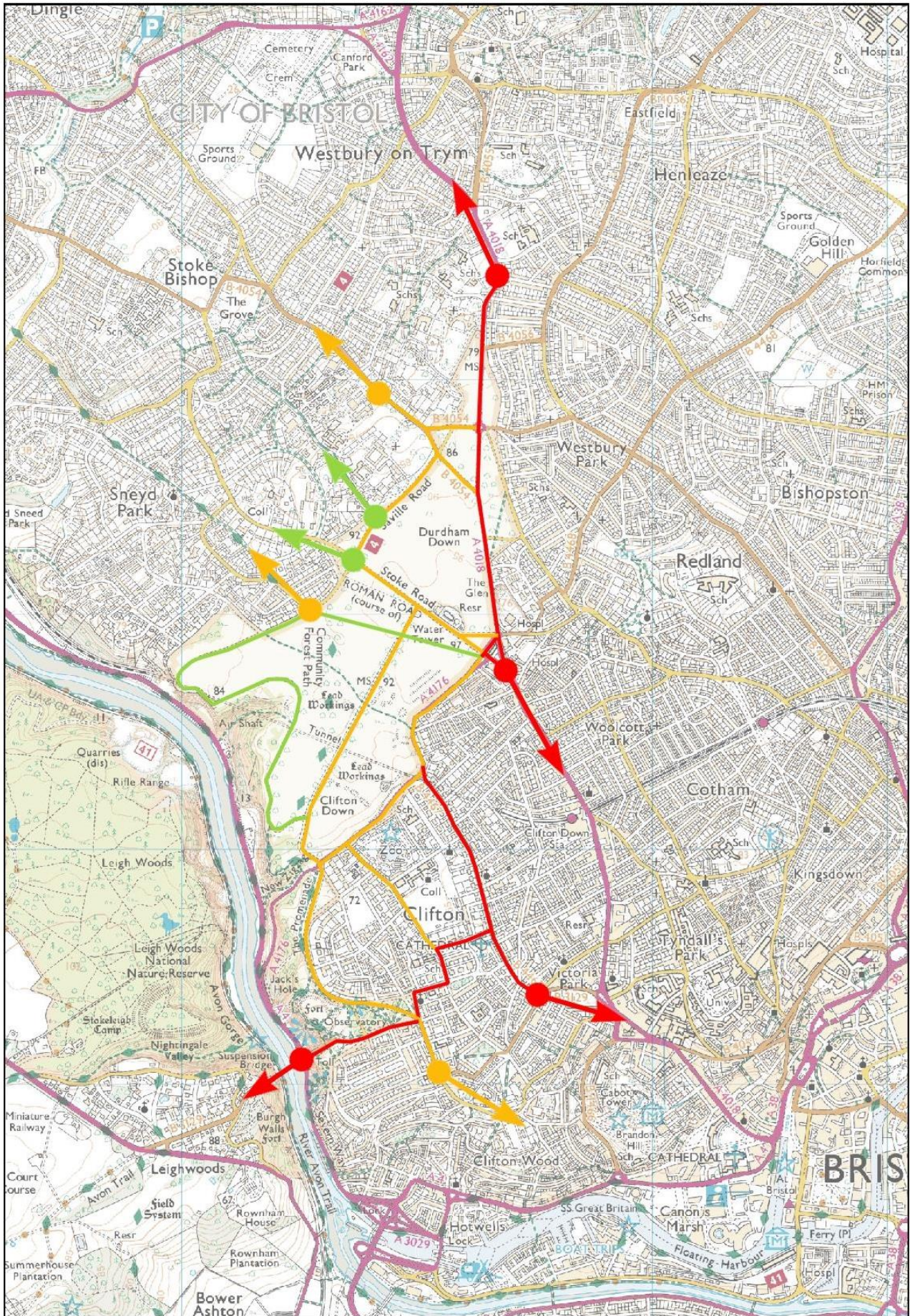
The greenway/quietway network shown in green provides quiet backstreet or traffic free provision often through parks or along traffic calmed roads with very low levels of traffic. These routes are complementary to the primary and secondary routes described above and should not be viewed as suitable as the only provision.

It is not proposed in this document to look at design solutions, but to offer suggestions for improvements that begin to deliver the aims and objectives of the Strategic Cycle Network.

## Prioritising investment

In order to achieve the greatest change for cycling investment should be prioritised in the following order:

<b>Primary Routes</b>	Westbury Road
<b>Secondary Routes</b>	Stoke Road; Saville Road; Ladies Mile; Clifton Down; Upper Belgrave Road; Parrys Lane
<b>Greenways/Quietways</b>	Circular Road/Rockleaze; Upper Belgrave Road - Julian Road





## Possible design options<sup>3</sup>

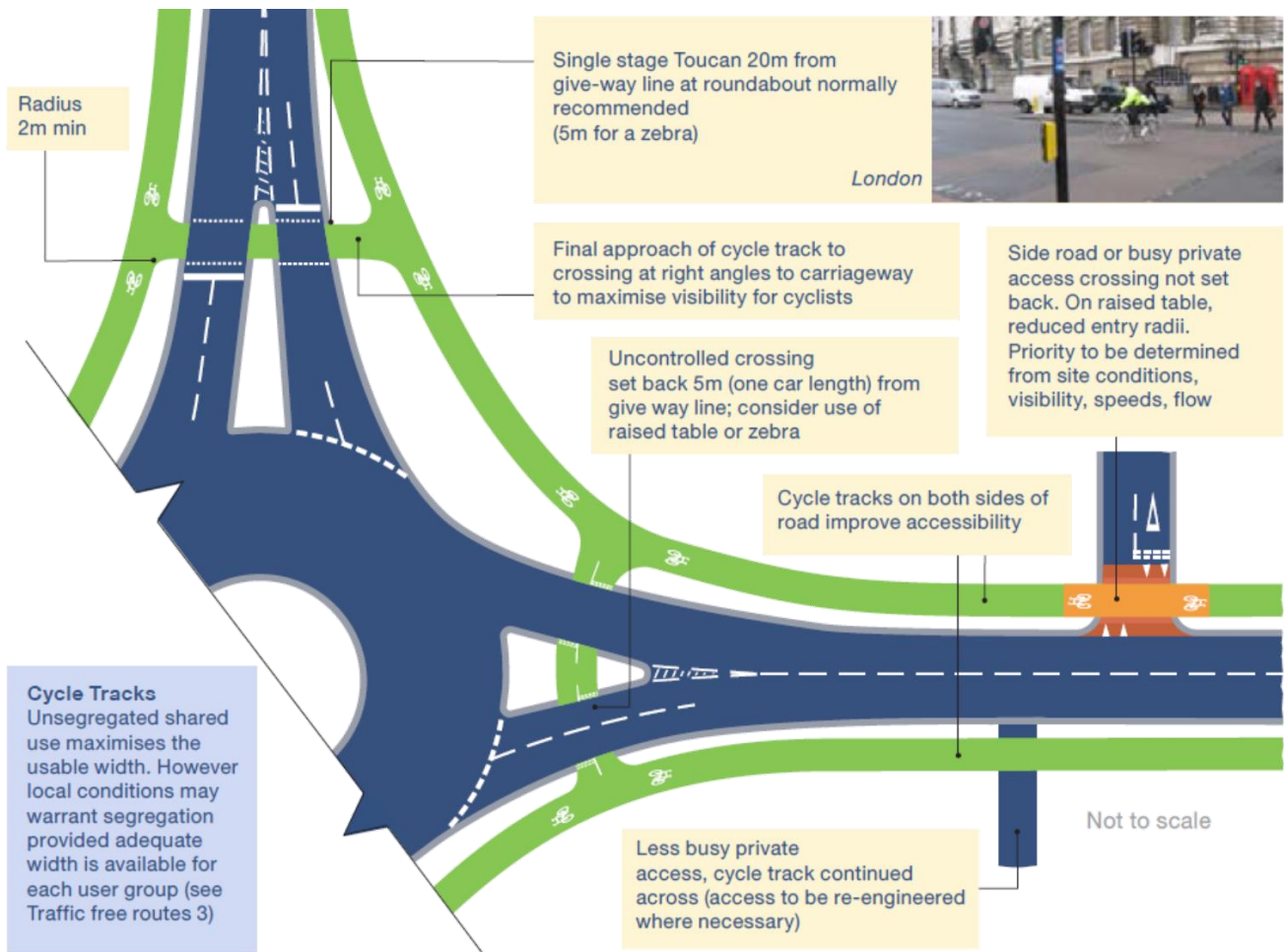
### Primary Network



#### Westbury Road

Option to provide cycle track adjacent to existing carriageway. Opportunity to create high quality north-south link along Westbury Road within Downs land to the west of existing mature tree corridor. Would facilitate fully segregated facility with retained existing pedestrian footway.

Segregated two-way cycle track



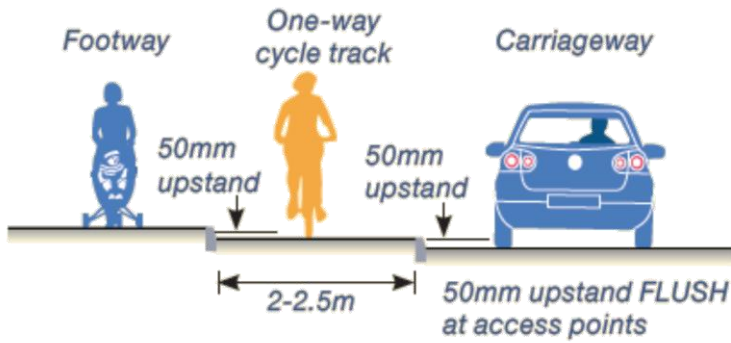
### Options for consideration at White Tree roundabout to facilitate onward journeys – would require

<sup>3</sup> All design details taken from Sustrans Handbook for cycle friendly design April 2014 available: [http://www.sustrans.org.uk/sites/default/files/images/files/Route-Design-Resources/Sustrans\\_handbook\\_for\\_cycle-friendly\\_design\\_11\\_04\\_14.pdf](http://www.sustrans.org.uk/sites/default/files/images/files/Route-Design-Resources/Sustrans_handbook_for_cycle-friendly_design_11_04_14.pdf)

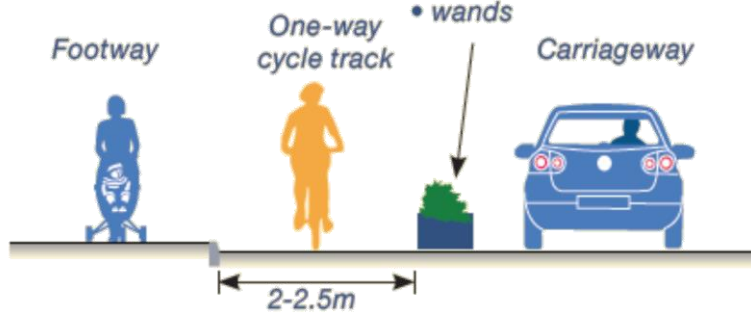
land take from Durdham Down, but would transform the junction for cyclists and make journeys easy and convenient for all ages.

**Secondary Network**

**Hybrid cycle track detail (e.g. Brighton)**



**Light segregation detail (e.g. Camden)**

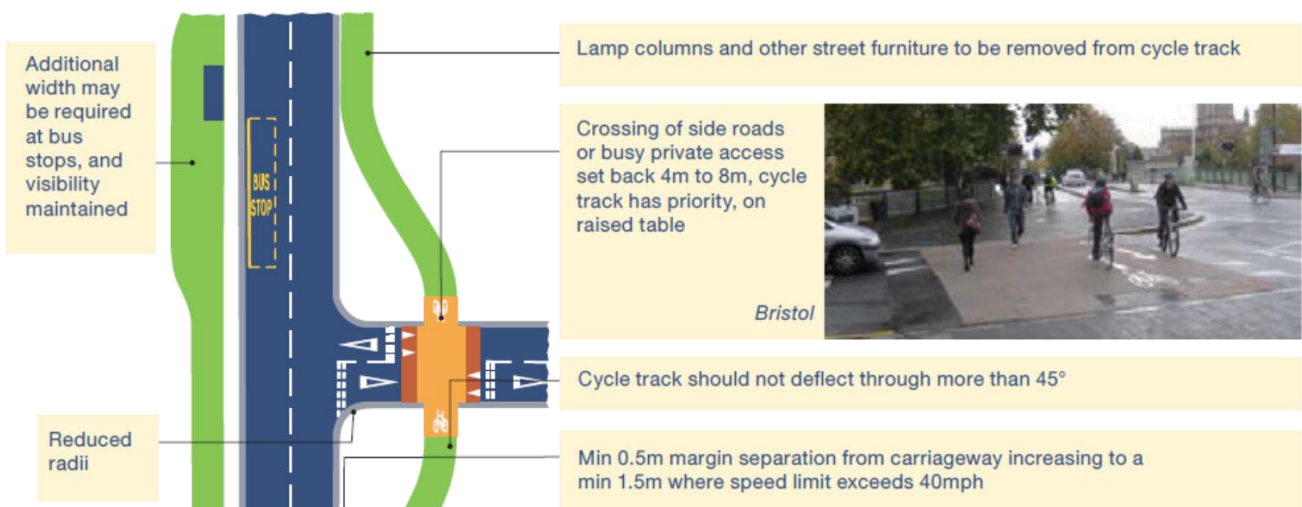


**Benefits : low cost; easily widened**

**Saville Road; Parrys Lane; Clifton Down**

Provide one-way cycling facilities with the direction of traffic. Depending on location either narrow existing carriageway widths or take land from Downs to provide additional with for cycling.

Opportunity in places to remove on-street car parking.



**Upper Belgrave Road; Stoke Road**

Where carriageway space is limited, or parking too controversial to remove, routes should be provided adjacent to the existing carriageway, but set back from the road where possible to provide a better quality facility.

## Speed reduction: physical traffic calming

This page illustrates the most common forms of conventional vertical and horizontal traffic calming measures, and how they can be designed to take account of cyclists.

### Vertical features

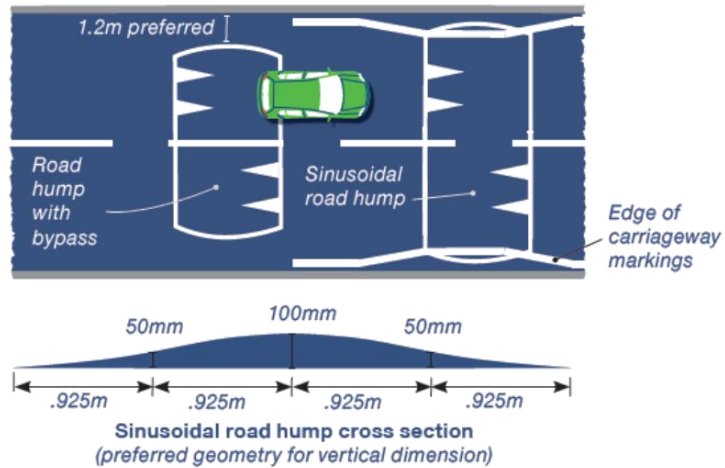
#### Road humps



Raised junction, Haringey



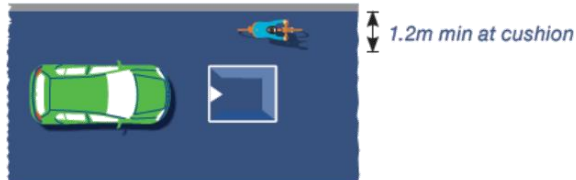
Sinusoidal road hump, Edinburgh



#### Speed cushion



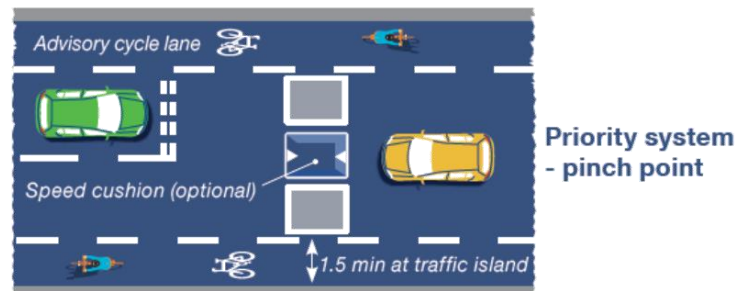
Speed cushions, Nottingham



### Horizontal features



Pinch point, Shrewsbury



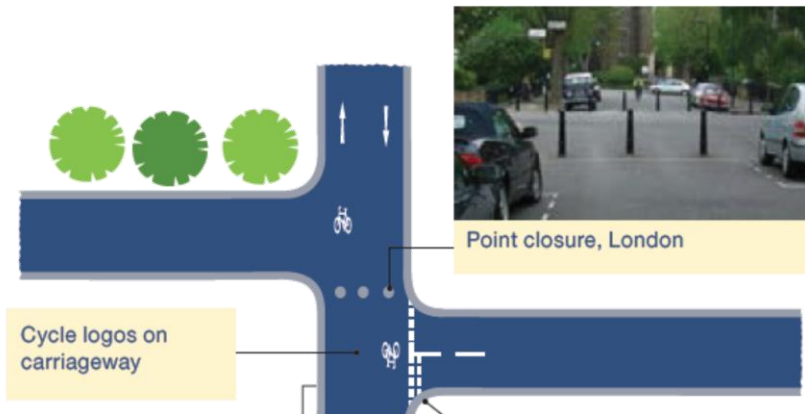
## Ladies Mile

Consider various traffic calming applications to enforce proposed 20mph limit. This road could also be treated far more cheaply by a point closure as suggested for Circular Road, or more expensively, with adjacent cycle tracks as suggested for Upper Belgrave Road.

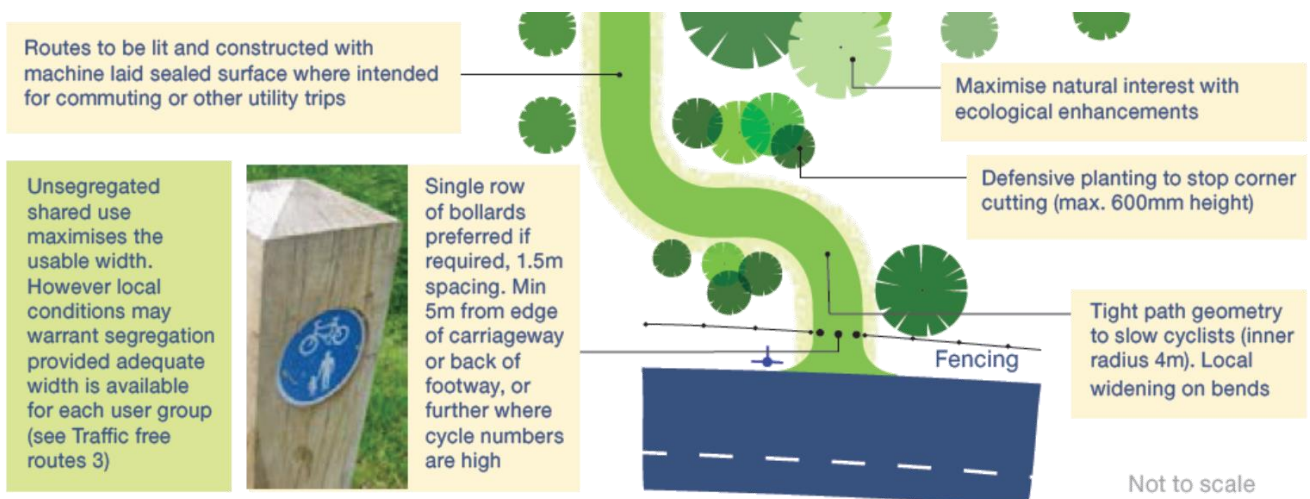
## Greenways/Quietways – longer term aspirations

### Circular Road

Consider closure to remove through traffic – simple bollard arrangement to reduce traffic volume and speed which is an identified issue at present.



Alternatively, consider trial of 'cycle streets'. Government consultation on Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions intends to permit cycle priority on certain streets where motor vehicles would not be permitted to overtake cyclists – Bristol has been identified as a potential trial city.



### Upper Belgrave Road – Julian Road

Greenway link across Clifton Down – designed to reduce conflict should be constructed to minimum 4m width, preferably 5m with similar design detail as at Castle Park with sets providing segregation between pedestrians and cyclists.

## Recommendations and next steps

2015 presents an ideal opportunity to improve the environment around the Downs for cycling for leisure and utility journeys.

1. The view of the Downs Committee is sought on the network of routes set out above and;
2. The approval of the Committee is sought to receive detailed reports for each of the options identified outlining the benefits and impacts as set out below for consideration during 2015:

### Westbury Road:

Feasibility study to look at the following:

- Land area required
- Impact on ecology
- Impact on trees
- Entrance and exit points to the path north and south end and associated works required to the public highway
- Crossing design of Parrys Lane
- Estimate indicative costs
- Prepare documents for planning application

### Saville Road, Parrys Lane, Clifton Down:

Feasibility study to assess the following:

- Collection of traffic volume and speed data
- Carry out parking turnover survey
- Come up with range of design solutions
- Assessment of planning requirement

### Upper Belgrave Road, Stoke Road:

As above, but with the following additional surveys:

- Phase 1 habitat survey
- Arboricultural survey

### Ladies Mile, Circular Road – potential longer term aspirations.

Assess the potential impact of closure and/or speed reduction and traffic calming on adjacent road network. Carry out:

- Collection of traffic volume and speed data
- Assess Traffic Regulation Order requirements